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IS THERE A JEWISH LITERATURE? ¹

Is there a Jewish literature? I should be indeed bold to appear before a Jewish literary society and venture to answer such a question in the negative. But I found it no easy matter to indicate in a brief headline the aim and scope of my lecture. Perhaps I should go further and frankly acknowledge that had I succeeded in hitting upon a title which would in succinct form have given away my argument, my task would have been ended. It is necessary then that I should state at somewhat greater length the real problem I am raising and trying to solve. Our question may be conveniently expressed as follows: Granted that the Jews possess a literature which is peculiarly their own, is that literature best or correctly described by the term "Jewish" literature? It is when the problem is put in this form that without any hesitation my reply must be given in the negative.

Obviously the theme resolves itself into an exercise in definition. Definitions may be odious, but they are necessary evils and useful instruments in the progress of science. I well remember how the late Professor Croom Robertson used to shed a piercing light on momentous disputes in psychology and philosophy by a rigorous analysis of the meaning of the terms employed by the different schools of thought. *The Dialogues of Plato* are practically searches after definitions, and we have the high authority of the late Professor Sidgwick for believing that the discussion

¹ A Lecture delivered before the North London Jewish Literary and Social Union, January 8, 1903.

itself may prove of greater value than the particular definition finally selected ¹.

Let us then to-night turn logicians, and ask ourselves what we mean by the terms "literature" and "Jewish." As logicians we must begin with "literature," the class name, before we deal with "Jewish," the specific attribute.

I presume that originally "literature" denoted a body of writings composed by individuals who were of a common race, formed a common nation, and wrote and spoke a common language. Thus Greek literature consisted in the first instance of the best productions in prose and poetry of born Greeks, who were constituents of the same Greek confederacy and who used the Greek language as their medium of intercourse.

Let us now take an illustration nearer home. English literature, on the same analogy, represents the highest expression of the great thoughts of born Englishmen, members of the English nation and writing in the English language. In the words of Stopford Brooke, "the history of English Literature is the story of what great English men and women thought and felt, and then wrote down in good prose and beautiful poetry in the English language ²."

Here we see at once ambiguities created by lapse of time and change of circumstances. In the first place, we have to extend the meaning of the term "English" to include Scotchmen, Welshmen, and Irishmen, who possess this attribute in common of using the English tongue. Nevertheless we still hear of the sensitiveness and wrath of the Scotch at Carlyle being included in a series of biographies called "*English Men of Letters*." In the second place, so many new and varied elements have in the march of events been introduced into and absorbed by the English nation, that in our definition of English literature we find ourselves ultimately compelled to eliminate the criterion of birth

¹ Sidgwick, *Principles of Political Economy*, p. 59. Cf. Keynes, *Scope and Method of Political Economy*, p. 152.

² Stopford Brooke, *Primer of English Literature*, p. 5.

and race. And this in spite of Stopford Brooke, who in the definition quoted above and in the following passage retains the race qualification. "It is this sameness of language, *as well as the sameness of national spirit*, which makes our literature one literature for 1,200 years ¹."

But what is an Englishman? It may not be amiss to quote in this connexion a few lines from Daniel Defoe's satire on *The True-born Englishman*.

Thus from a mixture of all kinds, began
That het'rogeaneous thing, an Englishman.

A true-born Englishman's a contradiction;
In speech an irony, in fact a fiction;
A banter, made to be a test of fools,
Which those that use it justly ridicules;
A metaphor, invented to express
A man akin to all the universe.

And now the difficulties begin to crowd upon us thick and fast. If Englishmen live in foreign lands and write books in English, must their works be excluded from English literature because they were not written within a specified area of soil? Must we shut out brilliant dispatches from our ambassadors at foreign courts? Must we ignore certain literary productions of men like Lord Curzon, Lord Milner, or the late Lord Dufferin, on the sole ground that they were not composed in this little island? Or take the case of the late P. G. Hamerton, the art critic, who wrote French and English with equal facility and felicity. Is English literature entitled to annex his French as well as his English works, on the plea that the author was an Englishman; or should French literature be permitted to claim them, because the language used was French? How shall we deal with foreigners like Max Müller, who happen to be responsible for better English than is written by many native Englishmen? Then the

¹ Stopford Brooke, *Primer of English Literature*, pp. 6, 7.

growth of the Empire suggests still further points of inquiry. What place, if any, shall be assigned in the ranks of English literature to colonials like Sir Gilbert Parker, who write excellent English but have not been born in England?

It may be urged that I am providing you with an unnecessarily lavish display of illustration, but I believe this to be the best method of showing the many-sidedness of the problem. The difficulties I have indicated lead inevitably to the conclusion that the definition of literature has to be narrowed in one direction and enlarged in another; narrowed in one sense by abandoning the criteria of birth, race, and nation, and widened in another sense by regarding language as the sole test in marking the boundaries of a literature. We have thus what logicians call a decrease in connotation or intension, but an increase in denotation or extension, because the number of persons possessing the attribute of using a given language is larger than the number of persons possessing the additional qualification of being born members of the nation using that language. A literature then comprises the corporate mass of compositions in any given language, irrespective of the birth, race, or nation of the authors.

How does all this bear upon the problem with which we started, Is there a *Jewish* literature? Holding as I do most strongly that the language in which the works are written is the sole and all-important criterion in any definition of literature, I am constrained to challenge the statement made by Karpeles at the very beginning of his work, entitled *Geschichte der jüdischen Literatur*. "The history of Jewish literature," he says, "embraces the collective writings of Jews from the dawn of history until the present age, without any reference to the form, *language*, or contents of those writings¹." I am prepared to agree with Karpeles in laying no stress on form and contents, but I am diametrically opposed to him when he ignores the Hebrew

¹ Op. cit., p. 1.

language as the essential feature in any definition of Jewish literature. I go further and maintain that the epithet applied to the literature must invariably be identical with the epithet applied to the language. No language, no literature. No *Jewish* language, no *Jewish* literature. There is a *Hebrew* language, so we must speak of *Hebrew* literature. The two views may be contrasted thus. Karpeles would include in Jewish literature whatever is written by Jews, be the language what it may, "Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, French, German, and many other languages¹." I would include in Hebrew literature only such works as are written in Hebrew, be the author Jew or Gentile. In other words, the definition given by Karpeles is built on a *racial* foundation; my definition rests on a *linguistic* basis.

Of course, if we could legitimately speak of a *Jewish* language, we should have a perfect right to speak of a *Jewish* literature. But I contend we are not justified in assuming that the term "Jewish" has ever been, or can ever be used as a synonym for "Hebrew" as applicable to language. As far as my memory serves me, there is only one instance in the whole of Hebrew literature where there is even a near approach to a trace of such a usage. The passage I have in mind is 2 Kings xviii. 26, 28, "Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah, and Joah, unto Rabshakeh, Speak to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and speak not with us in the *Jews' language*, in the ears of the people that are on the wall. . . . Then Rabshakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the *Jews' language*, and spake, saying, Hear ye the word of the great king, the king of Assyria." But even this apparent exception is open to a simple explanation. The word יהודית, "Jewish," does not mean the *Jewish* language, but the *Hebrew* language spoken by Judaeans, i.e. inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah. There is no implication that the language spoken in the kingdom

¹ Op. cit., p. 2.

of Israel was different from that current in the kingdom of Judah, but the universe of discourse is limited, and includes only the Hebrew language of the kingdom of Judah and the Assyrian language of the enemy then at the gate. As far as I can recall my reading, this is the only example in the whole of Hebrew literature, where the Hebrew language is called anything but עברית, "Hebrew," an expression which is absolutely unambiguous.

Not only are we thus precluded from using "Jewish" and "Hebrew" as convertible epithets, but we are entitled to go much further and stoutly maintain that the term "Jewish" never has had applicability to language, but has always borne a *racial* signification. The name "Jew" dates from the division of the kingdom, and originally denoted a Judæan, a member of the kingdom of Judah, in contrast to an Israelite, a constituent of the kingdom of Israel. After the exile, the Ten Tribes lost their identity, and the term "Jew" became the indiscriminate appellative of every born Hebrew.

On the other hand, "Hebrew" has always had a much wider connotation, with a distinct reference to language as well as race.

The history of Hebrew literature would thus be the story of what born Hebrews living in Palestine thought and felt, and then wrote down in good prose and beautiful poetry in the Hebrew language. But we feel at once the narrowness of this provisional definition and are unable to accept it as final. Problems arise similar to those which confronted us in our examination and criticism of Stopford Brooke's definition of English literature. Are Hebrew writings composed by Hebrews outside Palestine to be included in Hebrew literature? This question is not so absurd as may appear at first sight. We may recall the interesting commentary of the *Mechilta* on the first few verses of the Book of Jonah. "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah . . . saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; . . . but Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from

the presence of the Lord¹." "How could Jonah imagine" asks the *Mechilta*, "that he could flee from the presence of the Lord? Is it not written, 'Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me².' But Jonah believed that the spirit of divine prophecy would not rest upon him *outside the borders of Palestine*, therefore he rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord³." We should also remember the reason given in the Talmud for not saying Hallel on Purim. "Hallel is not recited in gratitude for God's mercy shown to Israel *outside the land of Palestine*⁴."

It is conceivable then that Hebrew literature might have to be bounded by national and territorial limits, that Jonah's notion of divine inspiration might have to be extended to the language in which the prophetic utterances were made, and that we might have to exclude from Hebrew literature compositions in Hebrew which were not racy of the soil of Palestine. But happily a more universalistic doctrine has prevailed. "In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee⁵." Every work, written in Palestine or outside Palestine, provided it be written in the *Hebrew* language, is blessed by its inclusion in Hebrew literature. Thus the prophets of the Exile are to be found in the Hebrew canon of the Bible, and the Talmud of Babylon and all other Hebrew works of all lands and of all ages find their place in Hebrew literature.

As a result of these developments, our provisional definition of Hebrew literature must be subjected to the following important modifications. It is not an essential condition that a Hebrew work to be included in Hebrew literature must have been written in Palestine.

¹ Jonah i. 1-3. ² Ps. cxxxix. 6-9.

³ *Mechilta*, ed. Friedmann, i b.

⁴ *T. B. Megillah*, 14 a.

⁵ Exod. xx. 24.

Furthermore, a Hebrew work to be included in Hebrew literature, need not have been written by a born Hebrew. It is a mere accident that in the past the racial element has persisted in the fact that Hebrews alone have written and write Hebrew. In the event of Gentiles using Hebrew as their medium in expressing their thoughts, we should have to find room for their works in Hebrew literature. To my mind this is not a startling suggestion, nor would it be a remarkable innovation. It would simply be the logical outcome of a traditional habit continued through centuries. We bind the Targum of Onkelos the Proselyte with our copies of the Pentateuch. It would be but a small step forward to include in Hebrew literature the Hebrew works of Gentiles who do not go the length of becoming proselytes.

I therefore claim that as against Karpeles, I have established my two propositions, first, that the expression "Jewish" literature is incorrect, and that we must substitute for it "Hebrew" literature; and secondly, that Hebrew literature comprises the corporate mass of works written in *Hebrew*, be the authors Jews or Gentiles. In other words the *linguistic* test is more logical and scientific than the *racial* criterion. *The Hebrew language is the basis of Hebrew literature.*

Now what do we mean by the Hebrew language? Just as by English we understand the old well of English pure and undefiled, into which from time to time there have been mingled supplies from many and varied streams, so by Hebrew we mean the language of the Bible, with the addition of those terms and phrases which Hebrew has in the course of ages absorbed and assimilated. The earliest form of the Hebrew language is very different from modern Hebrew in form, pronunciation, and appearance, but nevertheless the language written by the prophets and psalmists is the same language as that in which modern Hebrew works are written, just as much as the tree planted a hundred years ago is the same tree to-day¹.

¹ Adapted from Stopford Brooke, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

After having criticized Karpeles' definition of Jewish literature, I am all the more glad to have the opportunity of quoting the authority of his name in support of my definition of the Hebrew language. "The designation 'neo-hebraic' literature" he says "is wrong, and owes its origin to the prejudice which thinks a division must be made between the *old* Hebrew and *later* Hebrew literature¹." In the October 1902 number of the JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW Professor J. D. Wijnkoop has given more emphatic expression to the same view. "Hebrew" he writes "could not elude that general law, that every civilized language in the course of centuries undergoes great alterations. In addition to new subjects, different modes of reasoning, and foreign conceptions, brought about by greater communication and more extensive intercourse, it seems that a considerable part of these changes must be attributed to an ever-increasing tendency and desire on the part of those who use the language, to express their thoughts with greater precision and lucidity. With this end in view, they create for themselves new forms of speech, extend the stock of words, and seek new constructions . . . Later Hebrew, far from being a language having no connexion with the older tongue, ought on the contrary to be considered only as a direct continuation of it, indeed as *a language which is constructed upon the foundations of classical Hebrew*²."

I said before that the Hebrew language is the basis of Hebrew literature, and that we should therefore speak of *Hebrew* literature, and not *Jewish* literature. Well, what is the practical value of this correction? What advantage does this conclusion yield? *Cui bono*? If we use the term "Hebrew" literature instead of "Jewish" literature, I think we are provided with an instrument for overcoming the most intricate difficulties of classification. To which literature shall we assign works written by Jews in languages other than Hebrew? For instance, where shall we place

¹ Karpeles, op. cit., p. 2.

² *J. Q. R.*, XV, 37, 38, 49.

Zangwill's *Dreamers of the Ghetto*? Karpeles would include it in *Jewish* literature, because written by a Jew, and English people would claim it as a contribution to *English* literature, because written in English. Now it is inconvenient as well as unscientific to have such overlapping in definition. How can we get rid of this anomaly? By rigorously insisting upon the adoption of the expression "Hebrew" literature. Zangwill's *Dreamers of the Ghetto* is written in English, therefore it is English literature. It is *not* written in Hebrew, therefore it is *not* Hebrew literature. Mr. Israel Abrahams' *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* is written in English, therefore it is a contribution to English literature. On the other hand, Mr. David Yellin's Hebrew translation of this work is a contribution to Hebrew literature. The German edition of Graetz is a contribution to German literature; the English translation is a contribution to English literature, and the Hebrew translation by Harkavy and Rabbinowicz is a contribution to Hebrew literature.

In addition to works written by Jews in languages other than Hebrew, but which are not Hebrew literature, because not written in Hebrew, there are many works written by non-Jews in languages other than Hebrew, but which are nevertheless of vital and perennial interest to Jews. How shall we deal with them? How, for example, shall we classify the contributions made by Cheyne and Driver to our knowledge of the Bible? Here again my test holds good. The works of Cheyne and Driver are not Hebrew literature, because not written in Hebrew. They are English literature, because written in English.

I hope no one thinks I am arguing against a cosmopolitan taste in literature, and recommending that, even if we could, we should restrict our reading to works written in the Hebrew language. There are of course many contributions made both by Jews and non-Jews to the literatures of the world, which are not Hebrew literature because not written in Hebrew, but which we may nevertheless study with

advantage, either as Jews or as children of the world. But I am now pursuing quite a different line of thought. I am engaged in the task of definition and classification, and endeavouring to introduce precision into the employment of terms, and I maintain that the use of the Hebrew language is the sole criterion of what should or should not be regarded as Hebrew literature. History proves my contention. That which has persisted in Hebrew literature has always been that which has been composed in the Hebrew language or translated into the Hebrew language. Jews have always been wanderers over the face of the globe, and when circumstances made them cease to have a living interest in Greek, they dropped the study of the Jewish-Hellenistic literature. When Jews no longer needed Arabic in their intercourse with their neighbours, they ignored the Arabic literature of the Jews. All that Jews ultimately remember and love is that which was originally written in Hebrew or preserved in Hebrew translations. I doubt very much whether Jehudah Halevi's *Cuzri*, Bachja's *Duties of the Heart*, and Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* would have so many Jewish readers in modern times, had those works not been accessible in Hebrew translations instead of the Arabic in which they were originally composed.

The deeper we go into the problem, the more convinced we shall become of the inaccuracy of the expression "Jewish" literature, and the correctness and consistency of the term "Hebrew" literature.

But our study would be incomplete did we not take into consideration another aspect of the problem and inquire whether after all we cannot retain the expression "Jewish literature" and understand by it, the literature *about* Jews and Judaism, in whatever language and by whomsoever that literature may have been written.

At first sight this interpretation would appear to be thoroughly defensible, but I think that even this definition will on closer inspection be found to break down completely.

In the first place, if, as we are logically bound to do, we consistently adhere in the discussion to the *generic* meaning of the word "literature," we shall fail to find a strict analogy to justify us in explaining "Jewish literature" as the literature *about* Jews and Judaism. By Greek literature we understand literature written *in* Greek, and not literature written *about* the Greeks. By English literature we do not mean literature written *about* the English, but literature written *in* English, which may or may not have been written *by* Englishmen and which may or may not have been written *about* the English people. H. A. Taine's *Histoire de la Littérature anglaise* is without doubt a contribution to *French* literature, but according to the suggested interpretation of Jewish literature, it should be regarded as *English* literature, because it has reference to English literature. On the other hand I should classify H. van Laun's English translation of this work bearing the title, *History of English Literature* as English literature, because written *in* English. In English literature we do not include works *on* English literature which are composed in languages other than English. Otherwise English literature would have to annex German tomes on Shakespeare, although written in German. But the English translation of Ten Brink's treatise on *Early English Literature* belongs to English literature, because in English. Saintsbury's English work on *French Literature* is English literature, because written *in* English, and not French literature although written *about* the French. Grote's *History of Greece* is English literature, because written *in* English, and not Greek literature because written *about* the Greeks. Similarly, Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, Bolton King's *History of Italian Unity*, and Bodley's *France*, are all contributions to English literature, and do not belong to Dutch, Italian, or French literatures respectively.

No definition of literature which does not rest on the linguistic test can give a satisfactory solution to the following intricate case. In previous numbers of the JEWISH

QUARTERLY REVIEW, Steinschneider wrote a series of articles in English on "The Arabic Literature of the Jews." A German continuation of these essays has lately appeared under the title of *Die arabische Literatur der Juden*. Is the English work German literature because written *by* a German? Is the German work German literature because written *in* German? Are both works Arabic literature, because written *about* Arabic literature? Are both works Jewish literature, because written *about* Jews? I contend that the English work is a contribution to English literature, the German treatise is a contribution to German literature, and that neither belongs to Arabic or Jewish literature, although written *about* the Arabic literature of the Jews.

In the second place, we can object to the definition of Jewish literature as literature about Jews and Judaism, because if adopted and rigorously applied it would lead to the exclusion of certain forms of literature which Karpeles must maintain to be Jewish literature because written by Jews, and which from my point of view I should have to include in Hebrew literature because written in Hebrew. There are many works written in pure Hebrew and by Jews which are certainly not literature *about* Jews or Judaism, but which according to this meaning of Jewish literature must not be regarded as Jewish literature. There are, for instance, treatises in Hebrew on medicine and other branches of science, secular poems and dramatic compositions, which have not the remotest relation to Jews or Judaism, and which should accordingly be shut out from Jewish literature. But I urge that a Hebrew poem on the game of chess¹ is Hebrew literature, because written in Hebrew. Karpeles would include it in Jewish literature, because written by a Jew. But if the expression "Jewish literature" is defended and retained in the sense of literature *about* Jews or Judaism, we should find ourselves in the strange position of having to exclude such a composition from Jewish literature on the ground that its subject is not Jews or Judaism,

¹ Cf. Nina Davis, *Songs of Exile*, pp. 127-131, 141, 142.

although it is written in Hebrew and by a Jew. What an absurd conclusion.

There is another shade of meaning attached to "Jewish literature" to which similar objections apply. I refer to the interpretation of Jewish literature as literature inspired by Jews or Judaism. This argument can be more conveniently discussed under two headings, (a) translations direct from the Hebrew, and (b) adaptations from the Hebrew and developments of Jewish ideas.

As regards (a), translations direct from the Hebrew, if we accept the proposed interpretation of Jewish literature, we should have to assign to Jewish literature all the versions of the Bible in the world, because they have been inspired by the Hebrew Bible. The Authorised and Revised Versions of the Bible in English and Milton's translations of the Psalms would thus belong to Jewish literature.

Let us take another definite example. Some years ago the late Professor Kaufmann contributed to the *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* an article entitled "*Der Führer Maimuni's in der Weltliteratur*," in which he gave a masterly treatment of all the editions and translations of the *Moré Nebuchim*, and traced the influence of this work on subsequent philosophic thought. Are the translations referred to Jewish literature because inspired by Jewish thought, or should they be ascribed to the literatures of their respective languages?

Let us now examine a few cases where we can have no bias to affect our judgment in answering the question. Is Pope's *Iliad* a contribution to English literature because written in English, or Greek literature because based on the Greek? Bentley, the great classical scholar implied what his decision would have been, when he said that Pope's *Iliad* was good Pope but indifferent Homer. Does Jowett's *Dialogues of Plato* belong to English literature because in English, or to Greek literature because translated from the Greek? To my mind, it appears much more

reasonable in all these cases to return the translations to the literatures of the respective languages in which they have been written.

(b) If by Jewish literature we understand the literature of Judaism, i.e. the literature inspired by Jews and Judaism, we should have to incorporate in Jewish literature every commentary on the Bible in the world of every language and of every age, from the early church fathers, through the mediaeval monks, to modern exegetes like Delitzsch, Cheyne, and Driver. It would be a curious anomaly to describe Christological interpretations of the Bible as Jewish literature, a conclusion we cannot resist if Jewish literature means literature based on Hebrew thought. If we accept this definition, we should also have to include in Jewish literature works like Herder's *Geist der hebräischen Poesie*, Renan's *Life of Jesus*, and Huxley's *Science and Hebrew Tradition*, because they are all dependent on Jewish ideas. To take Jewish literature in this vague and wide sense would make it impossibly vast, almost coterminous with the literatures of the world, and we should find Jewish literature collapsing by reason of its own weight.

What lies at the root of all the misconceptions in the attempts to arrive at a satisfactory definition of Jewish literature which I have endeavoured to brush aside is, I believe, the confusion in thought arising from the fact that disputants do not consistently adhere in the discussion to one precise meaning of the word "literature." To describe a literature by its subject, contents, or source of inspiration, is to adopt a *specific* meaning of "literature," and not the *generic* connotation clearly implied when we speak of the literatures of the world, based on the languages in which those literatures have been written. Errors creep in when against all the rules laid down by logic, the *generic* meaning of literature is not maintained throughout the argument, and is not carefully distinguished from the *specific* meaning of literature, and thus the first Law of Thought, the Law

of Identity, is subtly violated. Literature has without question a *specific* nuance of meaning which would justify the expression "Jewish literature" in the sense of literature about the Jews or inspired by Judaism, in the same way that psychological literature means the literature on psychology in every language. But there is an important difference between bibliography and literature. In the specific sense of literature, Jewish literature may mean literature written in Hebrew, the language of the Jews; literature written by Jews in any language; and literature inspired by Jews or Judaism and written in any language by anybody. But in one and the same discussion to confuse these various possible explanations of Jewish literature, and without a word of warning or qualification to interpret them all as absolutely equivalent or synonymous, is to break all the principles of logical definition and division. It is as though we classified the literatures of the world into Greek (i.e. written *in* Greek), Latin (written *in* Latin), French (written *in* French), German (written *in* German), English (written *in* English), mathematical (*about* mathematics), chemical (*about* chemistry), Jewish (*about* Jews), Christian (*about* Christians), and Shakespearean (*inspired by* Shakespeare), where the *fundamentum divisionis* is surreptitiously but unmistakably altered.

The term "*Jewish literature*" thus stands once more condemned for its ambiguity, and we must therefore revert to my criterion of the Hebrew language as the basis of our definition of Hebrew literature.

There remains but one more question. How are we to deal with "Yiddish" literature? Not being written in pure Hebrew it would at first sight appear that Yiddish literature should be excluded from Hebrew literature, and not being written in the languages of the world, it should equally not be included in the literatures of the world. Where then is its place? Here we seem to have a case which does not conform to the requirements of my test,

and if it could be proved that it could not be made to fit in with my scheme, my definition of Hebrew literature would perhaps have to be seriously modified if not entirely abandoned. But far from weakening my argument, I think the problem of classifying "Yiddish" literature strengthens my contention.

But first, what is "Yiddish"? The word is derived from the German *jüdisch*, "Jewish," and usually denotes a strange compound of corrupt Hebrew and mediaeval or provincial German spoken by Jews, particularly in the Eastern countries of Europe¹.

Is there a "Yiddish" literature? As there is a "Yiddish" language, we cannot reasonably deny the existence of a "Yiddish" literature.

In what relation then does "Yiddish" literature stand to Hebrew literature? Just as dialect literatures are included in the literatures of the major languages, so Yiddish literature should be included in Hebrew literature, *whenever it is written and printed in Hebrew characters*. The meaning and importance of the qualification in italics will become apparent later on. There is a Provençal language, and therefore a Provençal literature, but the minor Provençal dialect literature is absorbed by the major French literature. There is a Kailyard school of fiction whose works are captured by English literature, and in general, dialect literatures find their proper position in the literatures of their major languages. Similarly, Yiddish literature, *when written and printed in Hebrew characters*, must be regarded as a peculiar dialect literature of Hebrew, and should therefore be included in the major Hebrew literature. In support of this argument it should be remembered that those who speak and write Yiddish, entertain not the slightest doubt that Yiddish literature forms a branch of Hebrew literature².

¹ Cf. Leo Wiener, *History of Yiddish Literature in the Nineteenth Century*; Karpeles, op. cit., II, 1000 ff.; *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Dialects."

² Yiddish is thus affectionately termed *Mammi-loshon*, a hybrid of Polish and Hebrew, meaning *Muttersprache*, mother-tongue.

They attach to Yiddish a sanctity almost equal to that with which they regard Hebrew, and some go to the extreme length of calling Yiddish a "heilige Sprache." Hence it happens that in the East End of London there is an institution, called the "Yiddishe" Talmud Torah, where the instruction is imparted in "holy" Yiddish, in opposition to the "English" Talmud Torah, where the teaching is given in "profane" English.

The case of Yiddish literature is thus extremely interesting, because it is an instance of a literature in a transitional stage, clinching and solving the whole problem with which we are concerned. We should not forget that although by "Yiddish" we usually understand Jüdisch-Deutsch, Kayserling has pointed out the existence also of a Jüdisch-Spanish and a Jüdisch-Portuguese literature¹, and Bacher has described specimens of Hebrew-Persian literature². Yiddish literature thus represents the early efforts of Jews to enter into the literatures of the world. As long as Yiddish works are written by Jews and printed in Hebrew characters we have an indication that the authors in their own judgment do not yet feel themselves outside the domain of Hebrew literature³. But as soon as works in Yiddish appear in non-Hebrew characters, Yiddish literature begins to cross the border, and a further stage is reached when Jews compose works in the pure languages of the world. Here we enter new territory, the divorce becomes absolute, the literary productions of the Jews in the languages of the world fall outside the scope of Hebrew

¹ e.g. *J. Q. R.*, XV, 112-114.

² *J. Q. R.*, XIV, 116 ff.

³ Since this article was written, the view adopted here has had a curious corroboration. Jews able to write Yiddish in Hebrew characters have been defined as prohibited immigrants into Cape Colony, because they were unable in the words of the Immigration Act "through deficient education to write out and sign in the characters of any European language, an application to the satisfaction of the Minister." See *The Jewish Chronicle*, Feb. 13, 1903. My argument is not affected by the subsequent recognition of Yiddish as a European language. See *The Jewish Chronicle*, April 10, 17, and May 8, 1903.

literature proper and have to be ascribed to the literatures of their respective languages. So that once more the language test is found to be the supreme and determining factor.

We have an excellent modern illustration of the principle just enunciated. Morris Rosenfeld has issued a volume of Yiddish poems, which for reasons already stated, I claim should be placed under the heading of Hebrew literature. But Rosenfeld's attempts in English verse and the English translations from his poetry made by Mrs. Henry Lucas¹, belong to English literature because written in English.

We may now summarize the whole discussion by tabulating the cases which have to be considered when marking the boundaries of either Hebrew or Jewish literature.

(i) Works written by Jews in Hebrew on any subject whatsoever.

(ii) Works written by Gentiles in Hebrew on any subject whatsoever.

(iii) Works written by Jews in languages other than Hebrew, but bearing on, or inspired by, Jews or Judaism.

(iv) Works written by Gentiles in languages other than Hebrew, but bearing on, or inspired by, Jews or Judaism.

(v) Works written by Jews in languages other than Hebrew, *not* bearing on or inspired by Jews or Judaism.

As indicated at the beginning of my paper, no barring limit is imposed as to time and place of composition, and every case given assumes the addition of the phrase "written in any country and in any age."

As a result of the definition with which he starts, that whatever is written by Jews is Jewish literature, Karpeles includes in Jewish literature (i), (iii), and (v). He entirely ignores the consideration of problems (ii) and (iv), gives very inadequate and by no means proportionate treatment to (iii) and (v), and inconsistently describes the activity of some Gentile writers who properly fall under category (iv), e.g. the Buxtorfs².

¹ *J. Q. R.*, XII, 89-91, 264, 265.

² *Op. cit.*, II, 1030.

Be the conclusion I reach right or wrong, I claim my method to be the more complete one. I have dealt with all the possible cases, and in consequence of basing Hebrew literature on the Hebrew language, I exclude classes (iii), (iv), and (v), and define Hebrew literature as consisting of (i) and (ii), i.e. the corporate mass of works written in Hebrew by Jews or Gentiles on any subject, in any country, and in every age. This I regard as the only real and consistent meaning to be attached to Hebrew literature, and the only way by which we can attain a well rounded-off discipline to justify us in placing Hebrew literature among the literatures of the world.

Must we then entirely abandon the epithet "Jewish"? Such a course was proposed by H. Filipowski, who in 1867 founded *The Hebrew National*¹. The aim of this journal was to exclude the words "Jew" and "Jewish" from all articles, and thus drive them out of existence, and invariably to substitute for them the term "Hebrew."

But the paper had but a brief career; only three numbers were issued without the desired result having been achieved.

As the term "Jewish" seems to possess abundant vitality, can we not make some concession to popular usage? I have already explained why I think the expression "Jewish" literature to be erroneous, but I am prepared to sanction the expression "Jewish" history, because the word "Jewish" has a racial signification, and "Jewish" history may correctly be interpreted as the history of the Jews. But would it not be inconsistent to speak in the same breath of "Jewish" history and "Hebrew" literature? By no means. Classical scholars supply us with a strictly parallel case when they distinguish between *Roman* history and *Latin* literature. There were Romans as a people, but there was no Roman language. The language of the Romans was called Latin. Similarly, we Jews form a race, but we have no Jewish language. Our language is called Hebrew. We are thus

¹ Jacobs and Wolf, *Bibliotheca Anglo-Judaica*, No. 1283, p. 150.

entitled to speak of "Jewish" history but "Hebrew" literature. Nevertheless I prefer the term "Hebrew" as the epithet to be applied both to our history and our literature, and without attempting to resuscitate Filipowski's journal, I should like to advocate the revival of his idea. As Jews we are Hebrews, and Hebrew is perhaps the nobler term¹. Besides it is an unnecessary inconvenience to use two adjectives where one will suffice. Why speak of "Jewish" history and "Hebrew" literature, when the one epithet "Hebrew" can be correctly and legitimately applied to both history and literature? Even as applied to history, "Hebrew" is the better term, because it covers the longer period of the annals of our race. *Hebrew* history begins with Abram the Hebrew²; *Jewish* history commences with the Exile, or at the earliest, with the division of the kingdom.

And now I must draw my argument to a close. All I claim for my paper is that it is the first consistent attempt to define the scope of what has hitherto been erroneously known as *Jewish* literature, but which I maintain should more correctly be called *Hebrew* literature. The solution of the problem I have suggested may or may not be the right one, but at all events I have proved to my own satisfaction, and I hope to yours also, that there is a real, deep, important, and by no means trivial meaning to be attached to the question with which I commenced, Is there a Jewish literature?

S. LEVY.

¹ Cf. Zangwill, on *Hebrew, Jew, Israelite*.

² Gen. xiv. 13.